



A literacy club is a Kiwanis club that focuses on raising the literacy levels of children. There are many ways to accomplish that purpose. Some of those methods will be discussed here, but the possibilities are limited only by the imagination of Kiwanians like you. Some of the projects that raise literacy are reading to children, providing books directly or indirectly to schools or children, tutoring children and providing useful subject lessons to teachers.

## How to begin

You should examine the needs of children in your area as well as your own interests. Because there are many literacy projects that can be done virtually or from long distance, there is no need to focus specifically on local needs, although all such projects can be done locally.

The first step is to decide what projects will most likely appeal to your prospective members. For example, if you want to establish a club to help the local school district, you should contact the headmaster or principal of the district or school you would like to serve. Express your interest in helping and learn their needs as well as the limitations placed on volunteers in the schools. Limitations could include restrictions on volunteers entering school property for security or health reasons. Keep in mind that helping schools and teachers is a cooperative process and the school or school district has primary control over the students and the classroom.

Other projects could include a wider outreach to children. A book drive could deliver books to schools, pre-schools and other organizations over a wide geographical area. Setting up book boxes in residential neighbourhoods could also cover a broad area.

## Potential Literacy Projects

### 1. Reading books to children

Reading can be done on a school by school basis or over the internet locally or to a wider audience. In a post epidemic world, schools may allow volunteers to enter the schools and read directly to children in the classroom. This requires the support of the principal, headmaster and/or school superintendent. Either the school librarian, teacher or Kiwanian can select an age appropriate book and read directly to students, encouraging feedback from the students. If done on a regular basis, rapport can be developed with the students and their teacher.

Reading can also be done virtually. There are many techniques for reading to students without ever entering a school. Reading to an individual class can be done by Zoom, Google Meet or other real time broadcasting method. There are also many programs available to record the Kiwanian reading, which can be transmitted to an individual teacher or placed on a sharing platform like YouTube. Some programs, like One More Story and TumbleBooks, allow the reader to show the book on the screen while reading it. Scholastic Books is a Kiwanis partner and has assets to assist the club.

The club can then either make the recordings available to identified schools or to a wider geographical audience. This can be done with pre-school providers as well as elementary schools.

## **2. Book drives**

A literacy club can focus on gathering books and distributing them to schools, Parent Teacher Associations, school districts or other learning centres. There is no geographical boundary to the reach of such a project. The focus can be on providing books that children can take home and keep, stocking libraries, or any other method of putting books directly or indirectly in children's hands. Book drives have been successful in delivering books to school districts with a large impoverished population, providing books for backpacks for children.

## **3. Neighbourhood book-sharing boxes**

Book-sharing boxes are popular in many neighbourhoods. The club could raise funds to buy or build such boxes and install them in neighbourhoods with many children and/or in areas of low-income families. The boxes would then be stocked with books. Children would be encouraged to select books to take home and keep, return or exchange them. The club should monitor and restock the boxes as needed.

## **4. Early childhood development**

The first five years of a child's life are the most important for its long-term learning. Numerous programs are available to increase the development and literacy of such children to ensure they can enter school ready to succeed. Such programs include reading and/or providing books to or otherwise supporting day care centres and pre-schools and supporting public library efforts to promote reading to newborns, infants and toddlers.

## **5. Tutoring and teaching**

Some schools welcome outside organizations that provide tutoring to students with special needs or issues. This requires close coordination with principals, headmasters and/or school superintendents because of security and child abuse concerns but provides unique opportunities to help raise the literacy of individual or small groups of children. Some schools, particularly in these pandemic days, welcome Kiwanians to prepare lessons on specific subjects to teach children. These can be effectively prepared at home and recorded on Zoom or YouTube for distribution. NearPod is a resource for such lessons. Recording them allows the teachers or other decision makers to determine the appropriateness of the lesson before presenting it to children.

### **Getting started**

The first step is to contact other people who are interested in improving the literacy of our children. Determine the project that is most appropriate and appealing to potential members. The possibilities are limitless. Email [info@kiwanis.eu](mailto:info@kiwanis.eu) to obtain more help in identifying options for your new club.

